651 [72] (c) Fishing. Fishing in the larger water holes could take
226 place only by authorization of the canton chiefs. The day on
634 which fishing took place was treated as a holiday. All the young men in the village and their neighbors, even if the latter did not belong to the canton, came out on the day set by the canton chief and fished for the benefit of the naba. All large fish were reserved for him, and only the small ones were left to the fishermen.

This practice still prevails.

776 Other common laws. Many deities are worshipped by the
782 Mossi. Groves, fields, mountains, etc., all have their "god."
661 It often happens that the naba (canton chief), at the behest of the soothsayers, offers an animal. This may be a sheep, a goat, or even a cow, and it is offered to one or another of the deities, either for his personal interests or for those of his people, or perhaps to ask for rain. The naba dispatches some sogoné [servitor] or samand'kamba [people of the outer courtyard] to one of the villages in his canton to find a victim. The animal is taken without its owner having any right to complain or to ask for compensation. Is there not a Mossi saying to the effect, Talagh-gounda
[538] Naba'gninga the serf raises livestock for the benefit of his naba)"?

For sacrifices prescribed for the Mogho Naba, the animals are provided either by the inhabitants of the [73] town of Ouagadougou and its environs or by the canton chiefs.

Labor Service Customarily Required of the Mossi on Behalf of their Chiefs

651 Forced labor was used to cultivate the fields of the naba and to repair or construct their houses.

647 The Mogho Naba. (a) Cultivation of fields. The duty of
651 cultivating the fields of the Mogho Naba fell entirely on the Bilbalsé,
241 the residents of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba) and on all former servitors and descendants of former servitors. The Kam Naba (chief of the young men), charged with assembling the workers, had a crier announce in all the important markets that on such-and-such a day the Bilbalsé were to assemble in the emperor's

644 651 241 fields. On that day, the Mogho Naba had one or two cows slaughtered and a large quantity of sagbo (millet cakes) prepared for the workers. If the latter, after being assembled two or three times in the manner indicated above, were not finished with all the fields, the work was carried on by the samand'kamba (the people who dwelt in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba).

144 574 The emperor, however, received none of the millet grown in his own fields, which, incidentally, did not have their present boundaries. This millet was reserved exclusively [74] for use as food for foreign visitors and for the feeding of horses (1).

1. For the ceremony of threshing this millet (kawinrẽ), see the special chapter below [Chapter 16].

644 651 It was the duty of the canton chiefs and the ministers to provide loads of millet for the use of the Mogho Naba and his harem ("harem" should be understood to mean all young or middle-aged women, but to exclude the elderly women who have to support themselves and who have their private fields).

644 651 356 (b) Repair of the houses of the Mogho Naba. The work of building and repairing the houses actually belonging to the emperor fell entirely upon the inhabitants of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba), Kamsaonghin (section of the chief eunuch), and Dapoya (section of the slaves of the Mogho Naba).

[343] The outbuildings, wẽdanga, four round huts with thatched roofs located outside the emperor's house, served as stables for the horses given to the Mogho Naba by canton chiefs or other personages and were built and maintained by three ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, and Gounga Naba, with the help of the people in their sections.

The tamping of the floors and clay roofs was done wholly by the wives of the persons responsible for [75] the construction or repair, that is, the wives of the ministers and of the inhabitants of their sections.

651 645 241 Labor service due the province chiefs, ministers of the emperor. (a) Cultivation of fields. The fields belonging to the ministers of the Mogho Naba were cultivated by a system of payments in kind as follows.

651 For the Baloum Naba, the work was done by all the bilbalsé.
645 The Kam Naba set the day for the sekka (gathering), and all the
241 young and able-bodied men were required to report. They received the food they required from the Baloum Naba. The number of work days was not fixed. The sekka might be held once or several times, depending on the acreage.

For the other ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Gounga Naba, and Larrhallé Naba, the field work was done by the people in their entourage (that is, the inhabitants of their respective sections) and in the neighboring villages which were formerly under their jurisdiction. Since the formation of the canton of Ouagadougou and its outskirts, the area has been under the exclusive authority of the Baloum Naba (fourth minister of the emperor).

645 If, however, the fields were so extensive that their cultiva-
476 tion could not be taken care of solely by the above system -- the
241 laborers also had to care for their own fields -- the ministers [76] called for volunteers from among the young men in the neighboring villages and paid them with food and drink. This is the sissoaga, a system commonly in use among the Mossi.

645 (b) Construction and repair of houses. As a general rule, re-
651 pair of the roofs of huts in the establishments of the province chiefs
356 was the duty of the inhabitants of their respective sections and of the neighboring villages under their jurisdiction.

651 The canton chiefs. The cultivation of the fields of the naba
634 and the repair of the huts in their establishments were wholly in-
241 cumbent on their subjects. Each village had a fixed number of
356 huts to be repaired or roofed; this is known as sough pilli, and it is still in effect annually.

651 Today, perhaps in the interests of tranquillity, canton chiefs require labor service in their fields only from their sogoné and samand'kamba and sometimes even resort to the sissoaga.

The local administration, with respect for local customs, has the policy of organizing the system in a way that, in our opinion, will safeguard the interests of the natives, overburdened due to the negligence of the province chiefs, and at the same time will enhance the prestige of the Mossi chiefs.

653 The naba is not entitled to any other labor services. The building of dams to provide water for the villages cannot be

535 or there will be falls which are inevitable when one of the girls is too robust.

535 539 Here, chosen at random, is one of the kiguibtobo songs:

M'Ma ho, ka M'Ma warla y e
Lebin wa regh'big' tim boudguin
n'di Mossa yarbate ribo

"Mother, oh, my mother,
Come quickly and take my child,
For I am going to the next village
To consume pitilessly the goods of
these wretched Mossé." (1)

1. Mossi.

[241] Chapter 16

Agriculture

241 787 Selection of land to be tilled. As he is wont to do in all important matters, the Moaga entrusts to a soothsayer the responsibility of choosing the land to be cultivated. In actual fact, he chooses it himself, but the diviner must tell him whether or not it is haunted by spirits and what sacrifices are advisable to protect him from evil spirits.

The soothsayer always warns him of the presence of spirits (kinkirsi) and prescribes the necessary sacrifices and alms.

241 782 Sacrifices. The new occupant calls for the head of the family or, if he is a Nionioga, for the Tengsoba, who is in charge of sacrifices. The following sacramental words are pronounced: "A zaguel tib reg' noag'la zom kom kon Naba zidwende, tib kon zig'tinguin damba, tib kon timpelem, tib kon yaramba, kon saramba, tib reg'kon zig, kinkirga ta wa me nan baou ki, on -- on tib reg'koin gnimassem, lass' pogh'banga, lasse zoug'banga, naore banga ..." Translation: "On the part of X, I offer this rooster and this water with flour to the sun god (Zidwendé), to the

241 782 brothers of the family heads who died childless (zig'tinguin damba), and to the ancestors and grandparents. May they see to it that these offerings are accepted by the kinkirsi (spirits of the fields) and that the latter favor X with [242] good health and large crops of millet and beans."

[787] Once these sacrifices have been made -- if they are accepted, the rooster falls on its back -- the new owner has his land cleared and awaits the winter season.

Field work. As soon as the first rains have come, the owner goes once more to the field and has another rooster killed and offered to the kinkirga [singular of kinkirsi] with a plea for gnimassem (good health) and large harvests which he will consume with new wives and new children (pog'palla, la bipalla). Afterward he sows large and small millet, peanuts, beans, etc.

If the year has been a good one and the Moaga has had fine crops, he is happy and in good time will remember the spirit of the fields. For the moment he is busy transporting the millet to the temporary granary (lourgho).

Threshing millet. Before his millet is threshed, the Moaga must make a sacrifice to the zéiga (threshing floor). The ritual words differ from those described above only in the following words: "X asks that this millet, which he will eat, be good for him and that he eat it in peace and good health with his family." (Kita ri ki wan ne lafi layelsomdé né a zak'ramba.)

241 476 [252] [243] He then appeals to the young men of the village for help in threshing his grain. For the occasion he has a great deal of beer prepared and quantities of beans (benga) cooked. The beans are prepared with sesame (sinni). After the job is done, two children between the ages of six and seven are called, and their hands filled with the bean mixture. They must run around the threshing floor while eating some of the beans. The rest will be scattered to the winds. They must stop three times for breath and look at each other. Then the remaining beans are distributed among the workers. They are also given beer.

423 Do owners retain rights over abandoned land? In order to occupy abandoned land; permission must first be obtained from the former owner, who retains his rights over the land. He may reclaim it at

423 will, and the new occupant cannot make the slightest protest.

It should be pointed out, however, that since land is most often abandoned because it was thought to be unproductive or haunted, there is rarely a claim to it by a former owner. In any event the matter is settled by the interested parties. The local administration and the canton chief rarely intervene in such cases.

Owners' rights over fruit trees in cultivated fields. Donsé 423 or néré [locust bean] trees whose fruits contain a yellowish, sweet 263 powder that is edible and [244] whose seeds are used to make soumbala, a fetid condiment much prized by the natives, remain the exclusive property of the former occupant. On the other hand, the tamsé (karite tree) belong to the new owner.

423 This is because the karite tree is found almost everywhere in the bush, while the néré is less common.

Rights of the chiefs over cultivated land. As a general rule, 425 since the principle of right by possession is honored among the 423 Mossi, a canton chief will not confiscate without reason cultivated land belonging to one of his subjects if the land has always been occupied by the occupant's grandparents.

When the land is unoccupied, however, or newly occupied, the canton chief may, by virtue of his absolute authority over his territory, take possession, and the new owner may not claim any compensation.

Field Work

241 In principle, a family field is held in common. When a woman 562 grows old, however, she no longer does field work with her hus- 595 band. She has her own field and feeds herself as best she may, since her husband pays no further attention to her and no longer supports her. The work is done by the family as a group, and the size of the field varies with the size of the family.

241 Early in the morning, usually before [245] sunrise, the head 512 of the family wakens the young people. They go out to the field, which may be five to ten kilometers away. Around ten o'clock, the women bring the remains of last night's sagbo or, lacking that, some millet flour which is taken in water.

241 At noon (wend'to souka, "the middle of the day") the family
512 rests in the shade of a tree. There are always some fruit trees in every field. Work is resumed at about two in the afternoon. At five the women return home to prepare food, and the men stop work at nightfall.

241 The sisoaga. When the family fields are too extensive to be
476 cultivated without help, all the able-bodied young men in the village are called to help with the weeding.

At such a time the head of the family gives several baskets of sprouted millet to his wives to make large quantities of dam, millet beer. He also orders them to prepare sagbo (millet cakes).

On the day set for the work, the young men go to the fields, where their enthusiasm is aroused by singing and the beating of drums. For their work they receive sagbo and dam. This is what is known as the sisoaga.

It is a kind of mutual aid, and without this indispensable system of solidarity, many fields would remain uncultivated.

[573] It should be noted, finally, that when a person falls [246] ill during the winter, his friends arrange to cultivate his fields, sometimes without any pay and simply out of a sense of solidarity.

241 Farm implements. As is the case everywhere in French West Africa, the natives have only the most primitive implements. Among the Mossi these include: the wanka or kounri, a hoe or Bambara daba to cultivate the soil; the sitoaga (small pickaxe) for sowing; and the laré (ax) to clear the site of brush and shrubs.

463 Other types of work. Aside from work in the fields, everyone goes about his own affairs. Some make baskets, hampers, and fans, while others weave cotton strips. It is perhaps of some
[564 interest to note that there is no caste distinction among the Mossi,
326] except for the blacksmiths; each person may practice the trade that suits him. This is why shoemakers mostly come from among the nakomsé (descendants of naba).

Food Crops

241 The principal foods grown by the Mossi are as follows. Kazouf (small white or gray millet).

241 Baningha (large white millet or sorghum).

These two types are grown for food, [247] although the large white millet is especially reserved for horses in well-to-do households.

[262 273] Kazinga (large red millet). As a food the poorer Mossi prefer this to the baningha, but it is more especially grown for the making of dam, millet beer.

[556] Mouï (rice) is sought only by the chiefs, notables, and a few families of dakangba (well-to-do men).

Benga (beans).

Souma (peas of either the small green variety or large white or red ones).

Niouyan (from niouri, "yam"), grown only in certain areas.

Nangouri or sounkama (peanuts).

Pèsça (fabirama) [a tuber plant].

Sinni or sili (sesame), grown only by a few people who like it.

Bito (sorrel), used in preparing the sauce served with sagbo.

Mana (gombo [okra]) is also cultivated.

Aside from its food crops, each family has its own plot for cotton (lamdo) which provides for the clothing needed during the year.

311 178 I am told that fields are much more extensive today than in former times, in spite of the abolition of slavery. This is explained by the fact that many areas supposed to be haunted were formerly left uncultivated. It is said, however, that the Moaga used to grow larger crops since in those days he was closer to the soil.

[248] At the present time there is a lack of farm hands. As [857] recently as twenty years ago, the young Moaga followed his parents to the field as soon as he was six or seven years old. He took a liking to the work at a very young age. Before the French [484] occupation, the Moaga rarely left his village because of the dangers on the roads, frequented in those days by bandits (usually descend- [579] ants of naba). People were even afraid to go into the bush alone, for fear of being attacked, captured, and reduced to slavery.

433 178 There was little contact even between adjoining villages. At Ouagadougou, no one ventured from section to section unless he had very good reason and was armed to the teeth. In short, everyone

433 made do with what his own village could produce, and there was
178 really no trade in the ordinary sense of the word. The Moaga, essentially a stay-at-home, depended on the soil for food and clothing.

●241 Only two new crops have been added since the coming of the
177 French: yams (na-niouyan, "chiefs' yams") and white potatoes.

The recent increase in the cultivation of cotton makes it easier for the natives to meet their tax, and this encourages them to grow even more.

178 The French occupation has brought many benefits in its wake (creation of a network of roads, peace and the resulting free circulation among the villages, and suppression of banditry and looting), but it has also given the Moaga a desire to leave the country.

167 The extensive recruitment of [249] laborers for the needs of
464 other colonies in the area, for work on the roads, and for the now obligatory military service -- all of which are accepted reluctantly by the Mossi -- has caused many young men to emigrate.

Some of them set out, for the Gold Coast preferably, without the slightest means of support. They go to work in the English colony in order to earn money for clothes. Since they had no money when they started out, they remain there for months or even years, and this seriously diminishes the agricultural labor force at home. It also forces their old and helpless relatives to cultivate their fields alone.

Besides, so many of them never return!

The Native Diet

262 Sagbo (millet mush) is the principal item in the Mossi diet at all social levels. Rice, regarded as a luxury food, is eaten by the
[435] naba and notables. It costs from two and a half to three francs a kilogram at Ouagadougou and is therefore too expensive for most people. It may be added that it rarely is found in the diet of civil service employees.

264 Mossi chiefs usually have two main meals a day: a [250] first meal of sagbo or rice at around nine in the morning, and a second

264 meal of sagbo in the evening.

What we call breakfast is hardly known. Between the two main meals, however, the chiefs have meat grilled or roasted. They are very fond of it and have it seasoned with enough salt and pepper to make it possible to consume the endless number of [273] small gourds of beer which they drink from morning to night.

The Moaga has only one real meal a day, the evening meal. A large millet cake satisfies the day's hunger. If there is any left over, he keeps it carefully for his morning meal. If there is none left, a frequent state of affairs, he makes do with his zompanrga, crushed millet diluted with water and sometimes eaten with a bit of vegetable fat or a few peanuts.

He rarely eats any rice, and if he has no sagbo, he contents himself with benga and souma.

261 It is during the festivals that the Moaga eats his fill. At such
527 times the head of the compound kills a goat, a sheep, or some chickens and has sagbo and fabirama prepared, or beans with copious amounts of karite butter. This is the feast. The members of the family stuff themselves to the point where attacks of diarrhea are inevitable. The results of the attacks are all the more serious in that they are never cared for properly.

263 The only seasonings known to the Moaga are kalgo (soumbala),
439 red pepper, okra, and salt. No more than a few years ago, however, before the [251] development of trade in the colony, salt was brought from Timbuktu and Mopti by the Dioula and Yarcé and was so expensive that the Mossi people who lived in the countryside often went for six months without tasting salted food.

241 There is reason to believe that the time is not far off when the Moaga will devote his efforts much more intensively to cash crops, such as cotton, potatoes, peanuts, etc. In this domain, the province chiefs at Ouagadougou have made real progress.

Mogh 'Nab' Kawinré (Threshing the Grain of the Mogho Naba)

241 Sacrifices. For this ceremony, the emperor summons the
643 Mankougoudougou Tengsoba (a descendant of the autochthonous
782 Nioniossé, masters of the land) to Ouagadougou and gives him a

241 sheep to be sacrificed to the threshing floor (zéiga).

643 The work. After this sacrifice, around two-thirty in the after-
782 noon, the Kam Naba (a notable in the section of the Baloum Naba) proceeds to the threshing floor with the young men from Bilbalogo and Dapoya who have been assembled for the occasion. The operation involves beating the millet stalks with tree branches cut to form an obtuse angle and called dabandé or soika.

643 When the job is done, the workers depart, [252] leaving the
241 grain to be gathered up another day.

The next morning they return to the field, preceded by the Bend' Naba (chief drummer), who plays the bouloumbougri kabse nanamsé to which the other drummers respond with bouroum-bouroum (the Bend Naba gives the names of the emperor's ministers, recalling the origins of each one, and wishes a happy new year to Oubri-yiri Naba, "master of the house of Oubri," that is, to the Mogho Naba; bouroum-bouroum has no special meaning).

Immediately thereafter, the Bend Naba invites the young men to the warba (funeral dance), which is actually only a confused stamping on the millet which in the process is scattered far and wide. Suddenly the drums stop, the signal for a rest. Then the Kam Naba from Bilbalogo divides the pile of millet into two parts by tracing a straight line across the center of the zéiga. The people from Bilbalogo (the section of the Baloum Naba) gather one half, and those from Dapoya (section of the house slaves) gather up the other half.

Whether it is a good or bad year, the emperor's harvest is expected to yield 100 baskets (péog' koabga) full of grain.

The Mogho Naba sends 50 to 70 canari of beer to the workers and shortly goes there himself. He also distributes two or three wassé (from waga, load of 1,000 kola nuts) to the ministers and to the workers.

After thanking and encouraging the workers, the [253] emperor returns to his house, escorted by his ministers and all the horsemen.

643 Mankougoudougou Tensoba then uses wet ashes to make three
241 lines on the ground in different parts of the zéiga. Then he takes
782 a lagha (small earthenware jar) and puts some water into it. He

643 241 782 pronounces a few sacramental words and lightly sprinkles the millet, saying: "Zâbre saga Ybéogo sâga, samb'da kôbo la ka toin sameb'la fi yé (the morning and evening rains may put a stop to the cultivation of the fields, but cannot injure the health of the King)." He next takes a straw broom (sagha) and pulls it apart in order to get a bit of millet to put into the lagha mentioned [343] above. He goes then to the temporary granary (lourgho, granary made of Mossi secco) and walks around it three times. An emissary of the emperor gives him a white rooster (nora-pelga), some beer (dam), and zom-kom (water with flour in it). The priest sits down in the shade of the lourgho and before making the sacrifice pronounces the following words: "Naba Siguiri bad'kom, deghin kon Naba Wogbo, tib reg, kon Naba Sanum, tib kon Naba Koutou, tib reg' kon Naba Baongo, tib kon Naba Karfo, tib reg'kon Naba Sawadogo, tib reg la be kon Nab, gnimassem, la lafi," which means literally, "I offer this rooster, this water with flour, and this beer to Naba Siguiri (father of the reigning emperor) in order that he will persuade the Mogho Nabas Wobgo, Sanum, Koukou, Baongo, Karfo, and Sawadogo, to accept them, so that the emperor may enjoy good health and happiness."

The Tengsoba then hands the small quantity of millet [254] which he took earlier to the pugtiéma (first wife of the king) to be made into a millet cake and offered to the spirits (manes of deceased emperors and other spirits of the threshing floor).

643 251 Transporting the millet to the granaries. The wives, daughters, and sisters of the Mogho Naba are alone given the duty of carrying the millet to the granaries (baoré) (1). We have already noted that

1. This baoré granary is made of earth mixed with quantities of straw.

there are supposed to be a hundred loads of grain, even though the harvest may not fill twenty baskets. The number of baskets required by custom is attained by putting a small quantity of millet in each basket.

643 241 The millet intentionally left on the zéiga. A little millet is purposely left here and there on the zéiga, and the Kassiri Naba (village chief) takes it for his own use. This signal favor, however,

643 imposes a heavy obligation on the chief. He is expected to in-
241 vite the emperor's principal bodyguards (samand'kamba) -- and there are many of them -- to a meal. He is also required to furnish a basket of millet for sowing the field of the Mogho Naba when the first rains come.

652 Utilization of the produce of the emperor's fields. As noted
644 in an earlier chapter [255] under Labor required of Mossi subjects by their naba," the Mogho Naba does not use the millet from his own field. The produce is used to feed the horses, to support the pages and samand'kamba, and especially to make beer on the festive days known as the tinsé and basgha of the king.

[256] Chapter 17

Inheritance and Rights of Succession among the Mossi

428 We have dealt with the question of inheritance at considerable length in the chapter on "Customs and Enthronement of Mossi Chiefs." We return to the subject because it seems necessary to clarify certain details of this question which is so important from the legal point of view.

The opening of succession. The succession is open upon the death of an individual, but property is not passed until after the funeral ceremonies (for all that concerns funerals, see the section on "Death").

Why is there a delay in taking possession of the property? As we have seen above in many chapters, the Moaga is superstitious. An old belief has it that to take possession of the property of the deceased before the funeral is celebrated will bring certain death to the heir or will cause some calamity for the whole family.

Further, since all the members of the family must be assembled for the funeral observances, the inheritance is well publicized, and [257] no one can later claim to have been defrauded.

Requirements for succession. In order to inherit, the following requirements must be met.

1. To be born before the succession is opened.

133 are bordered with hills. Nevertheless, it may be said that Mossi country is flat. It is covered with the classic bush of the Sudan with
[137] its small shrubs and tall grass interspersed with bastard mahogany, /7/ huge trunks of the baobabs, and tamarind and silk-cotton trees, thicker on the banks of the Volta rivers, thinner around the villages.

241 The country is quite fertile and easily provides for its inhabitants.
262 The various kinds of millet grow well, especially the small white variety (Pennisetum spicatum) which, mashed and boiled, is the staple of the diet and sorghum, or large red millet, which is used to prepare the famous beer of the country. The horses eat the latter kind, although they prefer the large white millet. Around the huts maize grows well in soil fertilized by the daily accumulation of waste. It is a welcome source of grain when the millet reserves of the previous year are running low and the current harvest has not yet matured. Maize fields are surrounded with a double row of sorghum and often
[283] with a double row of a fiber plant called bérensé, a sort of hemp which the natives use to make ropes. After the maize has been harvested, the field is planted with previously prepared tobacco seedlings. Finally, the sunken areas created when huts are built, as well as all slightly damp places, are planted with gombo, okra, which is highly valued as a sauce ingredient.

[311] During the rainy season no piece of land remains unused around the villages, and when the red millet ripens and the ears join across the path, passage becomes difficult. Even the hut roofs bear all kinds
[415] of calabash plants. These supply the housewives with gourds that fulfill the purposes served by our plates, dishes, glasses, and basins; the travellers with their flasks; the snuff-takers with their boxes; and the sorcerers with their spirit-calling instruments. The large gourds that are used to make drums grow among the shoots of maize. In the marshes near the watercourses where water lies stagnant, rice fields are planted, but rice is a luxury food, hard to cultivate because of
[554] the care it requires. The natives use it only on feast days or when they wish to honor a distinguished guest. Cotton is sown in damp places among the stalks of large red millet, and it is harvested much later. Peanuts and peas also take up part of the cultivated land, while beans creep along the ground between the shoots of small millet. Peppers, sesame, the indigo plant, yams, manioc, sweet potatoes, and a small

tuber, Coleus coffini, which Europeans call oussounifing or fabirama, and which may replace potatoes in a pinch, are cultivated in the soils most propitious to them.

The precious karite /shea/ tree (Butyrospermum parkii) grows in most fields; its fruit, prized for its cool and slightly sweet flesh, contains a pit which yields karite butter, the fat most widely used in cooking and to make soap. Around the villages, and sometimes even within them, the néré /locust bean/ tree (Parkia africana) produces elongated pods; its bark, mashed in water, yields a paste that is used to harden the floors of the huts. Its flour makes a cooling drink when mixed in water, and it may also be eaten; its seeds /8/ are used to make kalro /kalre in the original/, the soumbara of the Bambara, an ingredient /made from locust beans, néré/ of all carefully prepared sauces. The doubalé and silk-cotton or kapokiero trees spread their shade over the weavers, numerous among the Mossi, and over the talkers who are even more. Bamboo grows well in the damp southern regions, and the palm oil tree is occasionally found. The caoutchouc liana, however, has not yet been introduced.

Small chickens run in all directions through the villages, along with domesticated guinea hens. Everywhere in the bush near the huts, little boys herd goats and sheep; this is the task of youngsters here at the age when their contemporaries among us /in France/ begin to learn the alphabet. The most common sheep and goats are small in size. The sheep have short hair. Sometimes, especially in the larger villages where markets are held, goats and sheep are to be seen with long legs and long, curled horns. They are imported from the northeast and fattened to be sold as butcher's meat. The height of fashion for the wife or a prosperous naba is to be followed by a Touareg /Tuareg/ sheep, well washed and very white. It is fed on millet leftovers and bean mush, and its mistress often presents it with a bit of salt to lick. In short, it is well cared for and agreeably fat; on some important feast day, it will embellish the menu.

The huts are usually guarded by very commonplace dogs, often ill-tempered, but cowardly. A stick is enough to drive them away. They are mostly used in the hunt, the great Mossi pastime during the dry season. Domesticated ducks are sometimes found in nabas' households, as well as pigeons, but these birds are not widespread and not within the reach of everyone. Finally, almost every group of huts has cats which belong to the women and which are difficult

852 [302] shaved strips on top of the head, while the sides are shaved similarly in semi-circular strips. On the seventh day, people who were previously circumcised bring chickens to sacrifice to the spirits of the paths so that all will go well, but the newly circumcised take no part in the proceedings. The children wash, oil themselves, and put on their 852 beautiful clothes. Everything is brand new, the breechcloth, the 292 trousers, the shirt, the blanket, and the headgear. The belt is adorned 301 with a knife in a leather sheath and with a needle case which has at the end a tuft of leather strips with cowries attached to them. They [176] hold a cow's tail, also adorned with cowries, to drive off the scheuyan spirits who dislike little rascals and people who dress too well. Both wrists are adorned with copper bracelets. Needless to say, this flashy new outfit with its cowries that clang like bells lures the eye and bewitches the young boys, who decide to be circumcised at the first opportunity so they too may eat well and wear beautiful clothes.

852 /44/ The circumcised boys continue to walk bent over, leaning on [48] their sticks, but their crude staff is replaced with two sticks decorated with burnt designs and tied together. They no longer wear a tail. They go to greet the chiefs, and they thank those who have given them gifts. They walk to the sound of the large drum, since the bindré is forbidden at circumcision ceremonies, and sing plaintive chants to the spirits. They parade in the marketplace and display their clothes in the villages. They dance before the chiefs, and their dances are very [535] graceful indeed. They dance in unison to the beat of the drum, making the same gestures all together or two by two, varying the figures in accordance with the beat. After seven days the festivities are over, and they all return to their families and take up everyday life as though nothing had happened.

We shall now study this everyday life.

/45/ BOOK III. DAILY WORK AND TRADES

Chapter 1. Occupations of a Mossi

221 The Mossi are essentially cultivators, and it may be said that no 241 Mossi who works at a trade will fail to cultivate his fields when the

221 rains come, laying aside any other task no matter what his profession
241 may be. The Mossi year is divided as described below, and year follows year without bringing any changes in this monotonous existence.

The rainy season from May to October is the time of the hard labor of cultivation, and all Mossi devote themselves fully to the task. Men, women, and children are always in the fields. They cut down the [805] thorn bushes at the beginning of May, as soon as the Pleiades appear on the horizon and the baobabs begin to burgeon. This is spring (sigu). For this work they use a small hatchet, a few centimeters wide, with a short, easily grasped handle, and a forked stick to fold back the thorny branches so they may more conveniently be cut at the base. The branches are piled in heaps and burned one evening as soon as they are dry. When the first copious rains fall, usually in June, the natives immediately sow the small white millet used to make sarabo, the staple of the aboriginal diet, and the large red millet or sorghum from which millet beer is made.

Sowing is regarded as one of the most laborious tasks, because it forces the sower to remain bent so as not to lose sight of the stretch already covered. The natives sow with an old worn-out hoe, with which they strike the ground twice in order to make a small hole. The grain is carried in a gourd held by a string to the left hand; this leaves the fingers free to seize a few grains which are dropped into the hole. A little soil is then replaced by the hoe. When the rain has soaked the ground more thoroughly and the millet has begun to grow, maize is sowed around the huts.

Following the first weeding of the fields, beans are sowed among the shoots of small millet, and cotton among those of large red millet or near the watercourses. The ground is then prepared to sow rice, peanuts, and native peas. Meanwhile the fields must be hoed incessantly to remove the weeds that would smother the young millet shoots. If the rain is too abundant at the end of June, the cultivators are often overwhelmed with work, and they complain that it has become impossible to keep their fields clean. Gombo (okra) and all the condiments for making sauce, peppers, tomatoes, etc., are planted around the maize fields, near the huts, along with /46/ native hemp and all sorts of gourd plants. In favorable soil, hence only in certain areas, fabirama, manioc, and yams are cultivated in a special manner.

221 Those who raise chicks take them along to the fields in an oblong
235 cage of plaited straw or willow. When they get to the spot where

221 they will be working, they open the door of the cage and the mother
235 hen comes out. She is tied to the basket with a string, and the chicks run around her. If their master finds a good termite nest, he takes it to his little charges and breaks it in two. In the evening he puts the hen and chicks back into the basket and carries it home suspended from his shoulder.

[805] The heavy rains fall in July and August. This is summer (seoro).
221 Whenever the ground is not too soggy, everybody runs to the fields at
241 dawn and works until nightfall. One or two women stay home to pre-
476 pare food for the laborers, whose strength must be maintained for all this hard work. No one may rest. Only the sick and the helpless old people stay home, and even they are put to work, looking after the babies. This is the time when wealthy people call friends to their aid. The owner of a vast field has every member of the village notified — especially the young men, those who own some obligation toward him, those who have an eye on his daughters — that on a certain date he will be weeding his field, and at dawn of that day everyone gathers and labors while the drums spur them on. On another occasion, this man in turn will help those who have worked for him. This practice of mutual aid is very advantageous because a field overgrown with weeds is cleaned in a single day, but it becomes onerous when people must appeal to their neighbors several times in the course of a season.

221 The heavy rains stop in August or September, the maize is ripe,
241 and feasting begins. Roasted corn ears are a prized tidbit, especially
262 when the kernels are still tender. There is one kind of maize, faintly sweet, which when sautéed in butter recalls our garden peas. Everywhere the children and even the elders feast on maize; everywhere people offer a visitor a few ears of maize, which are often roasted on the spot. When the maize harvest is completed, maize gruel, which recalls the famous Italian polenta, advantageously replaces millet mush and brings a pleasant change to the daily fare, especially since gombo is ripening and adds variety to the sauce as well. Bellies fill out, faces glow with health, and as a very natural sequence, hearts are flooded with joy. The end of the dry season may have been difficult because millet was running low; the winter tasks may have been laborious; but now everyone makes up for it. The harvested maize is replaced in the fields by tobacco; its seedlings were prepared as the harvest drew near.

[805] At the end of September or beginning of October, the large red millet is ripe. This is autumn (houpéla). Maize is now too tough

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Above: Water Carriers.
Below: Youths Returning from the Bush with Bundles of Straw.

Above: Threshing Millet.
Below: Winnowing Millet. Millet Granaries in the Background.

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for roasting and is replaced with green millet, eaten raw after being beaten with a small stick to remove the chaff. /47/ Certain kinds of large millet are sweet and not too unpleasant to eat in this fashion. Horses grow fat because millet is their staple food and they may eat as much as they please. Men also profit greatly, because beer brewed from new millet tastes much better than that made from old millet, and when millet abounds, drink is never wanting. At this time rice is harvested, threshed on the threshing floors, and laid aside carefully for festive occasions.

At the end of October the rains have stopped almost completely. The beans are gathered and laid out in the fields on millet stalks or on séko held up from the ground by forked stakes to keep the termites from eating them, or the beans may be brought home and tossed on the séko which serve as shelters in front of the soukala. Now is the time to harvest the small millet, which is dry. The millet stalks are severed at ground level by the men and laid out with all heads oriented in the same direction to facilitate the work of the women, who cut off the heads and gather them in heaps. When the millet has been cut, the women fill their baskets. The largest containers are used for the occasion, and each woman uses her ingenuity to pile the millet as high as possible over her basket, using the longest ears or bean stems as supports, like the Zouaves who vie for the tallest pack. Should the line of women on their way back to the village meet a man known for his generosity, they sing, cry out, and surround him until he throws them a few handfuls of cowries to buy a jar of beer.

As they near the threshing floor their cries get louder, and each woman comes to the granary and hands her basket to the man who stands there. These granaries are very crudely built and consist basically of sticks driven into the ground in a circle to hold up a séko which is wrapped around them. The floor is made up of another séko, usually resting on the ground but sometimes raised on stones or forked sticks to avoid termites. This is where the millet is placed prior to threshing. The granaries stand around the threshing floor of beaten earth, which is located 100 or 200 meters from the village, sometimes even farther. Thieves are no important threat. They may cut down millet when it stands in the bush, but they rarely steal millet already stored. Only goats, sheep, and guinea hens are to be feared, and they are kept away from the granaries by thorns.

As soon as these heavier tasks are over, everyone digs up peanuts and peas. The whole family gathers under the shade of a tree, and

221 the men bring bunches of peanuts. While nibbling on the green nuts
241 and talking, they all separate the pods from the leaves. The latter
are carefully set aside along with the bean leaves. They make ex-
[231] cellent fodder for the horses during the dry season, when the sun has
burned off all the grass in the bush.

221 By November harvesting is completed. The sun has already dried
241 out the grass, and the time has come to cut straw for séko and roofing.
356 /48/ This task is usually reserved for children and servants (dakonré).
857 The head of the household tells each one of them the number of straw
bundles he is to cut, and every morning the children set off in groups,
a sickle on their shoulders. They look for straw on the banks of the
watercourses and return when the sun begins to scorch. This marks
the end of the working day, and there is nothing to do now but rest.
The dry season is indeed a time of rest, and from November to May
there are no pressing tasks.

[805] It gets cold in December. This is winter (sapolro). The natives
221 gather at dawn around fires of millet stalks, twigs, or straw; anything
241 combustible serves. Every newcomer must contribute an armful; it
[372] is the price of admission to a seat near the fire. At the end of December
476 all the straw for roofing has been stored, and then the small millet
is threshed. Every inhabitant of the village has the use of the thresh-
ing floor in turn. He notifies his friends and acquaintances as he did
when he weeded his field. The millet beer is ready, and on the pre-
vious day the women have covered the area with cow dung diluted in
water to harden the floor. At dawn the friends arrive, and the millet
is removed from the granary and spread out on the floor. This is done
with the help of millet stalks tied together in bundles and dragged
along the ground with ropes while a man bears down upon them.
The flail is merely a stick cut in the bush, a tree branch shaped in
such a way that the part which is held in the hand is rather thin and
flexible, while the part which is used for threshing is quite thick and
forms an obtuse angle with the part in the hand. The boys line up in
a row, with the tots at either end; the drummers stand before or behind
them; and the flails fall with the beat, crushing the ears of millet
and separating the very dry grain from the stalks. All the while the
old men sit in the shade of the granaries, talking, smoking, and
sewing clothes. When the threshers get to the end of the floor, they
retrace their steps and rest, while the old men gather with straw brooms
the grain which has been scattered outside the pile.

221 After a few hours when the millet has been sufficiently threshed,
241 the emptied and broken husks are swept to the side. The grain is
476 gathered in a heap, and a strong fellow tosses it into the air with a
788 wooden shovel to separate the chaff from the good grain, which is put in a heap. When all the grain has thus been winnowed, it is surrounded with a ring of ashes to protect it against evil spirits. Then one of the threshers, who is not a member of the family, puts some millet in a gourd and sprinkles it with water. He proceeds to throw it by the handful onto the millet pile, saying: "So-and-So fears rain," mentioning the name of the owner of the harvest and the name of every member of his family. He ends by saying: "When we are finished weeding, let the drought come. When we are finished planting, let the heavy rains come." If the owner of a horse is present, he receives a gourd of millet for his mount. Each of the elders also takes some for his chicken. If this ceremony is not carried out, the millet may not be used as seed the following year.

221 /49/ The women come with their baskets; a man takes one of the
251 brooms and sinks it into the millet heap in various places; then the
[482] men fill the baskets and help the women place them on their heads. At the house the millet is unloaded into granaries made of clay mixed with finely cut straw. These granaries have the shape of large jars 1.50 meters high; they usually rest on large stones, and they are
[343] smoked out beforehand to get rid of termites. They are closed with a lid of the same material and covered with a small thatch roof as a protection against rain, for they usually stand in the open air in the inner courtyard. Millet beer is brought and drunk on the spot while the millet is being winnowed. Sometimes the festivities end with dancing, and then everyone goes home, to begin again another day. The month of January goes by in this fashion.

221 February, March, and April are vacation months, months for hunting and fishing.

224 Actually no Mossi is a hunter, yet all Mossi are hunters to some
411 degree. Since the French occupation, men armed with very primitive flint guns are sometimes seen on the fringes of the heavy bush which borders the Volta and contains large game. These flint guns are so crude that they frequently burst and wound the man who recklessly
224 loaded it with too much powder. These natives know the bush thoroughly and are very helpful to the adventurers who wish to hunt koba, buffalo, elephant, leopard, or even lion, although the latter is to the

776 other hand, the kikirsi do not drink fermented millet beer, but they must be offered some before the yeast (da'nodo) is added. They have their preferences like human beings. They know hatred and jealousy, and sometimes they even kill one another. They are said to have two 776 sexes, to marry, and to procreate. They even have the special faculty 845 of always bearing twins, and this is why twins are called by their 551 name and are dedicated to them; it is believed that spirits dwell within them.

776 The birth of twins causes their mother much trouble. Formerly 845 both were sometimes put to death, while at other times only one was killed. When a woman bears twins, she builds at the door of her hut 782 a tiny miniature house where the spirits dwelling /82/ within her children will take shelter. Three times a year if her means allow it, in the spring, in the winter, and at the height of the rainy season, or at least once a year, a guinea hen must be offered to the kikirsi. This fowl is sacrificed exclusively to them. On that day they must also be offered their favorite foods, and this means that honey, sesame, and millet cakes must be purchased, that beer must be prepared and a jar saved without yeast, that millet mush has to be cooked, and especially that no pepper be added to the sauce. Otherwise the husband, [753] wife, or children will be afflicted with a dreadful eye disease, for such is the illness which the kikirsi have the power of visiting on human beings.

776 As children, twins may wear only the kankabra, a garment made 845 of black and whitish threads, the characteristic clothing of the kikirsi. Happily, they are later allowed to dress as they please. If the mother dies, the twins offer the sacrifices themselves and build the small hut that serves as a dwelling for their little spirit. The later born twin is considered the older of the two. They both wear the same bracelet and share everything given to them. It is not considered proper to make a gift to one without giving the same thing to the other. Actually, these customs are to be found in Africa from Bambara country to Tanganyika.

776 To return to the kikirsi themselves, they are present everywhere. 241 In the bush they are fond of termite nests, large and small. They also like open spaces. They are to be found around the villages; there are ponds set apart for the kikirsi, wells considered to belong to them. There are spirits watching over every field, and before sowing, as also before harvesting millet, the master of the field sacrifices a chicken to the spirit on a stone in the middle of the field. The

776 kikiriga, in turn, are to ward off anything that might harm the crop,
241 birds, caterpillars, thieves, and the like, and to fill with millet a granary of the size drawn on the ground with ashes at the time of harvest. If the kikiriga has properly carried out his duties, he gets another chicken when all the grain has been gathered in a heap.

776 Pregnant women are under the protection of a special kikiriga, and
[843] small children have one of their own to ward off illness and danger. Do we not say ourselves that a special Providence watches over the very young?

776 Actually, everyone has his kikiriga. Some have an evil one, and
828 those are the people who quarrel with everybody, the ones who are never successful, whose livestock dies, for the kikirsi often kill the
[577] goats, sheep, and horses that die of illness. Other people have a good kikiriga, and for them everything goes well; they were born under a lucky star. These are the engaging, sweet, good-natured people
[513] who get rich and who have many children. When a Mossi lies down to sleep in his hut, he rests his head on a stone or a small mound of beaten earth. This is where his kikiriga dwells, and from time to time, especially when he feels the need for special protection, he
[782] sacrifices a guinea hen or sometimes even a goat, with the understanding that the spirit will chase away all fellow spirits who might want to harm him and will avert all illness and all danger from his path.

/83/ The tangandé is a spirit who has the shape of an animal and
776 who is regarded as the protector of a village. The term is also ex-
778 tended to designate the spirit's place of residence, usually the sacred
825 grove but sometimes a mere stone or even an open space. The tangandé may be a crocodile, a boa, a leopard, a turtle, a deer, a hare, etc. The animal is sacred to the whole village and may not be killed in the sacred grove, but it may be killed elsewhere, even a short distance from the thicket.

776 The tangandé is a guardian spirit because it protects men and sends
755 its servants to accompany the village people on trips when they request it to do so. The natives incessantly turn to it for protection and the sorcerers incessantly refer those who consult them to the tangandé to obtain cures and to request the release of souls held captive by evil sorcerers. When someone dies, sacrifices are made to the
776 tangandé with requests to protect the survivors and to ward off illness.
782 When souls leave the body during sleep, they often go to the sacred
[774] grove. Anyone may sacrifice to the tangandé and in the tangandé.

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

belonging to him, he can be relied upon to share with the members of the lineage if this should be necessary.

Capital goods in the form of houses, granaries, and fields are the property of the lineage. Individual rights are limited to temporary use and custodianship but are passed on to others when a general shift in residence and role follows the death of a senior member of the lineage. Although property is passed on in accordance with the rules of descent in the lineage, part of the property redistributed represents the product of the labor of the lineage as a consanguineal kin group. For, as has been indicated, the labor of the wives, who are not lineage members, is as important as that of their husbands and children.

The lineage head discusses the coming year with the other elders, and an over-all production plan is made out. They decide what fields are to be left fallow, what ones are to be planted to cotton and the varieties of millet, what lands may be used by individuals desiring to plant a cash crop, and what, if any, land may be loaned to neighboring lineages or to in-laws. With the approach of the first rains, all economically active men and women go to their fields to prepare them for planting, leaving behind in the village only the old people and the children who are still too small to assist in the fields or tend their fathers' animals.

A considerable portion of the land within the limits of a Mossi village is under the direct control of the village chief (*Tenga Naba*) and the earth custodian (*Tenga Soba*), the local representatives of political and supernatural authority. This land is used for the public way, for the market place, and for burial grounds and latrines. Except for that which is too poor for any purpose, all available land within several miles of a village is put under cultivation.

Ki is the generic name which the Mossi give to the millet, which is the basic product in their economy and which receives the largest single allocation of land and labor of any Mossi economic activity. Two kinds of millet are planted, a large-grained variety (*kenda*) and a small-grained variety (*kazua*). Millet is the first crop to be planted after the rains have begun. Small- and large-grained millet seeds are frequently mixed and sown in the same field. Small-grained millet may also be sown in the same field with a white bean (*benga*). A "tired" field may be left fallow for five, ten, or fifteen years. When it is first replanted, it will be seeded to millet for the first three years. The fourth year it may again be put into millet, but if the previous crop was not good, cotton will be planted. Usually, a Mossi farmer plants cotton for two years, millet for three, then groundnuts, more cotton, then two more years of millet. It is believed that cotton renews the soil because of the intensive cultivation required: the earth is brought up into hillocks and turned over; after picking, the plant may be turned under and left to enrich the soil.

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

241 picking, the plant may be turned under and left to enrich the soil.

241 476 Apart from the co-operative cultivation of fields under the proprietorship of the lineage elder, each farmer works for himself. He aids his relatives, and they in turn assist him with his work, but the results of their communal effort are not shared. This applies not only to the work of planting but also to cultivation and harvest. The decision about what is to be planted in a particular field and how it shall be cultivated rests finally with the individual farmer.

Communal or co-operative effort is much more characteristic of the work of cultivation than of the planting period, when everyone is in a hurry to get his own seeds into the ground and requests for assistance are [461] not welcomed. A strong note of competition is evident at this time. A man takes pride in his efficiency as a farmer, and there is a race to see who can get farthest along with his work. In the earliest phase of prepa- [572] rations for the approaching rainy season it is the individual's best friend upon whom he relies most for assistance. He is the first person to be called on for assistance in clearing the field for planting. If a Mossi farmer is unmarried, he may also ask the other unmarried men of his lineage for help. If a long day must be spent in the field in order to clear and clean it properly, his mother will offer the helpers the midday meal, which is carried out to them as they work.

622 651 241 *Naba koba* (chief's cultivation) is the name given to the work which the villagers do in the fields belonging to the village chief. A village elder is charged with announcing when and where work in the chief's fields is to be done, and each lineage head relays the news to his kinsmen. This contribution of labor is no longer obligatory, as it was formerly, but only [626] a question of social pressure and recognition that individual well-being and the welfare of the village "depend on the chief."

241 463 Every Mossi is an agriculturist. Although agriculture is the principal source of income, everyone also engages in crafts, particularly during the dry season when the work in the fields is finished. However, there are no full-time crafts specialists. Even the African functionaries in the European administration and the teachers, clerks, and merchants all work in their fields part of the time during the rainy season. The activities of the blacksmiths, leather workers, butchers, wood workers, herbalists, and small merchants are carried out on a much smaller scale and are fitted into the routine established by the rains and the growth of their millet. Only elders whose age keeps them from the fields might be thought of as specialists who do not participate in agriculture, but their land is worked by younger members of the family, and they take a keen interest in the course of its cultivation. The village chief, the earth custodian, and certain other elderly and important members of the community do not cultivate; this is because of their position and age rather than because

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

they are so exclusively occupied with political or religious duties. In every case, they own fields and are dependent upon their produce for an important part of their subsistence.

Each Mossi village in the Yatenga holds a market every third day; markets operate in nearby villages on the intermediate days. There are few full-time merchants; men usually market their wares themselves and trade in items of European manufacture. Except for the sale of meat, it is a man's wives who sell farm produce. For marketing her husband's surplus millet, a woman receives a gift when the market closes.

Markets are most active in the early hours of the morning when meat and farm produce are fresh. By afternoon only a few merchants stay on, trying to sell their remaining produce to late-comers at greatly reduced prices. Social satisfactions derived from participation in the market are greatly valued; it provides an opportunity for meeting friends and kinsmen and for exchanging gossip and observations on one another's dress, the crops, and current political developments. The market is a place for making loans and receiving small gifts from kinsmen and friends, for flirtations and the arrangement of rendezvous, and for that casual sort of social interaction which is one of the principal pleasures of life in the Yatenga.

The Mossi farmer is dependent on the co-operation of the members of his lineage both for the success of his individual economic endeavor and for their support if his crop should fail. To be assured of this support, he must contribute generously to the maintenance of his position in the intricate network of rights and obligations which describes the relationship of the individual to his kin group. A constant exchange of visits and presents, ceremonial and economic assistance, and presence and participation in the affairs of the lineage are necessary to maintain his status within this group.

The nature of the social, economic, and emotional dependence of the individual on his kinsmen, his affinal relations, and his neighbors is such that his social well-being and economic success may properly be regarded as depending as much on his skill in manipulating this complex web of relationships as on his specifically economic endeavors. When a man decides to forego a second weeding of his fields in order to prepare presents and make the journey to the funeral of a kinsman, he is making a choice which, considered in the total context of the culture, is realistically in accord with his own economic best interest.

The farmer feels equally dependent on the deceased members of his lineage, the ancestral spirits (*kiemse*). If he feeds them a chicken, they may steal the soul from a neighboring stand of millet and bring it to enrich his own field. If properly treated, they can be depended upon to protect his shea nut trees from the high winds which might otherwise

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

by being placed on his altar, where they become part of the earth symbols (*tiinse*). As a result, these altars are piled high with old sardine cans, bicycle parts, remnants of clothing, unusual stones and scraps of metal, baskets, wooden implements, and weapons, which are left there to decompose slowly and return to the earth. Travelers in a strange village need never fear that their property will be stolen if they deposit it near the altar of the earth custodian.

When a farmer wishes to clear a part of the bush which has previously been unused, he must first ask permission of the earth custodian and make a present to the earth deity. If he wishes to use the land again the following year, the request and the gift must be repeated. Such a field may be passed on to his descendants, who have a right to the land so long as they acknowledge each year the authority of the earth custodian. If a new well is to be dug, his authorization must be requested, and his advice may also be asked for the proper place to seek water. The wise Mossi farmer consults the earth custodian frequently about his agricultural activities. He also reports anything that he may have done to alter the condition of his farmlands or the surrounding bush, not because each individual act is of such great importance, but because maintaining good relations with the custodian of the earth is in the interest of his own economic security.

OTHER ASPECTS OF RELIGION

Other descendants of the original inhabitants of the Yatenga, the Bogobs, are especially charged with the propitiation of Tido Wendé, the vegetal manifestation of Wennam. In addition to the many manifestations of Wennam and the complex organization of priests and ceremonial designed for his propitiation, many other forces inhabit the unseen world of the Mossi. Indeed, to the observer their number and variety might at first seem to be almost as great as the number of Mossi with whom he may discuss these beings. Each man's description of these supernatural beings varies in terms of his subjective reaction resulting either from direct experience of them or from stories he has heard concerning their behavior. In contrast to Wennam, whose disposition is essentially benevolent so long as he is properly propitiated, these lesser supernatural beings are more frequently malicious and always more difficult to control. Perhaps for these reasons they are not worshiped. The Mossi's concern is not to propitiate them but to neutralize their evil intentions by the use of protective charms (*tim*).

The "bush," the unused land lying beyond the farms, is the least-known aspect of the Mossi natural environment. This is especially true of those far areas of the bush where even the authority of the earth custodians does not extend and where unknown spirits dwell. For although the

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

their continued reliance upon his political power and intercession with his noble ancestors, in order that the village may enjoy peace through the coming months of the dry season and early rains at the beginning of the next economic cycle.

With this observance all of the sources of power—both social and supernatural—upon which the Mossis' well-being is dependent have been thanked for their support throughout the year just ended and have been encouraged, by the generosity of their supplicants, to continue their benevolence for the year to come. The Mossi understand the nature of these forces and the manner in which they can be controlled. They know them as manifestations of a deity who will reward their observance of ceremonial obligations with the soft winds and heavy rains that bring a rich harvest. The individual is intellectually and emotionally absorbed in maintaining a balance in his relationship to a world he understands. His efforts to maintain this balance are occasionally frustrated by sorcery or the contrary will of his deity, but he enjoys, nonetheless, a very real security.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS AT THE NIGER IRRIGATION PROJECT

Given the nature of these interrelationships between the organization of economic activity and the social and religious institutions of their culture, the adjustment of the Mossi who have been resettled at the Niger Irrigation Project has implications which go beyond mere technological adaptation. The settlers must, in fact, adjust to a totally changed cultural setting.

Arriving at the Niger project, they fail to find the institutions upon which they have always depended for their security; they find instead a natural environment governed by forces they do not know. Their water supply is no longer dependent on the supernatural controls of the earth custodians but comes from a dam built by Europeans. They are socially isolated from their kinsmen and their ancestral spirits in the Yatenga, and they derive little comfort from the presence of fellow Mossi with whom they have neither consanguineal nor affinal relationship.

Settlers were forcibly recruited for the Niger Irrigation Project until 1944, when forced labor was abolished throughout the French Union. Now a recruitment program brings Mossi families to the project each year; every family head receives a house, oxen, a plow, and a plot of land proportionate to the number of active workers accompanying him. Under the supervision of European agronomists, they apply modern methods to the production of rice and cotton. The project administration buys their crop for cash after deducting fees for seed, irrigation, mechanized cultivation, transportation, and processing. In theory, ten years of

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

debt-free cultivation entitle the settler to permanent residence on the land he has been loaned.

Adaptation to the conditions of the new geographical setting in which the Mossi find themselves has been relatively rapid and easy. The Yatenga and the Niger project lie within the same climatic zone; the only important ecological difference between the two areas is the increased water supply resulting from irrigation. This change in the origin of the water supply, control of which provides a basic sanction of Mossi religion, was less disturbing to traditional belief than might have been anticipated.

Rather than diminishing their belief in their own religion, it only convinces the Mossi colonists that the forces of the natural order are different in their new habitat and accordingly must be controlled in a different way. Finding the indigenous inhabitants of the French Sudan, the Bambara, to be zealous Moslems, the Mossi settlers have accepted Islam as the religion of their new country. Confident that their religious obligations in the Yatenga will be taken care of by the elders who have remained behind, and with some pressure from those who have already become Moslemized, new arrivals rapidly embrace Islam as the system by which the supernatural forces governing their new environment can be manipulated.

Their acceptance of Islam has been as superficial as it has been rapid. There is time neither for the study of Moslem theology nor for the soul-searching which must precede the rejection of previously held religious beliefs. With a tradition which emphasizes the observance of religious form rather than intense emotional participation in ceremonial, their observance of the five daily prayers, taking of a Moslem name, deference to the marabout, and casual attention to certain dietary prohibitions should be viewed as their rational reaction to the fact of being in a strange land with an obviously different supernatural order which must be dealt with in a new way. Desire for a measure of control over this new supernatural order, pressure for conformity to the religious norms of their new social setting, and—perhaps most significantly—the permissiveness which characterizes the West African's acceptance of the existence of new supernatural forces, makes Islamization possible without the rejection of previously held religious ideas or practices.

In contrast to the relative ease of their adaptation to the natural and supernatural aspects of their new environment, their adjustment to the social situations which result from the change in economic organization has been most difficult. They must, of course, learn a new technology: the cultivation of rice and cotton by modern methods. Since the machines used for clearing the land and for the harvest are operated by

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

specially trained non-Mossi personnel, the use of irrigation, fertilizer, and the plow are their most important technological innovations. Despite their difficulty in communicating with the European agronomists under whose direction they work, they soon master these agricultural techniques. Patterns of consumption are also altered, rice taking the place of millet as the staple in their diet. After some initial illness they become accustomed to rice but suspect that it is less nourishing than their traditional diet.

Far more difficult than adjusting to either the new technology or the diet is adaptation to the changed social organization. Trying to ease this adjustment but with an imperfect understanding of traditional Mossi institutions, the project administration has tried to re-create their forms in the area of resettlement.

Despite this, the new colonist finds himself isolated among social forces he does not understand. The attempt to reproduce the traditional pattern of residential grouping is meaningless in the absence of the lineage. Separated from his kinsmen and his community, the colonist is confused by social institutions whose resemblance to those he has known in the Yatenga exists only on the level of form. He does not like or understand being housed with strangers as if they were his kinsmen. Equally incomprehensible is an approximation of the familiar political organization which, ignoring the traditional sanctions of chieftainship, has a former earth custodian, whose supernatural role has traditionally precluded the exercise of political authority, as paramount chief.

Despite the efforts of the European administration to reproduce their structural appearance, the institutions of Mossi society are so interrelated that the change in the organization of economic activity has created new needs which make alterations in traditional institutions inevitable. Rather than permitting the colonists to modify their indigenous social organization to fit these new needs, the social structure rigidly imposed by the Europeans has impeded the Mossi in their efforts to adjust their institutions to the changed situation. The delegation of authority to inept administrative appointees thinly disguised as chiefs and to the older, least adaptive members of the settler communities only complicates the problem of adjustment.

Isolated from their kinsmen and the protection of their ancestral spirits, the colonists miss the emotional and social satisfactions of extended family living as well as the security of an established position in the community in which they were born. Adherence to the traditional kinship organization, with its emphasis on obedience to the elders who have remained behind in the Yatenga, makes marriage at the Niger project almost impossible.

The young men born and raised at the project resent the tradition

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

too young to be listened to seriously by their elders. If they are returning as senior members of their lineages, and since their power and prestige are dependent on the maintenance of the socio-religious status quo, they are unlikely to be innovators. For these same reasons the few changes in the social organization which have occurred at the Niger project have had little effect on the social environment of the Yatenga.

Most of the agricultural techniques acquired in the Sudan are useless in the Yatenga because of the absence of irrigation. Even were this not so, the rationale of the modern agricultural methods employed at the Niger project is not explained to the settlers; they are required to follow the instructions of the European agronomists or be penalized. As a result, the improved agricultural techniques of the Europeans are regarded as just another of the white man's incomprehensible ways and are quickly forgotten.

The response of the Mossi to resettlement at the Niger Irrigation Project shows that in a situation of rapid cultural change, retentions or changes on the superficial level of form are misleading; nor is a brief statement of the functional interrelationship between institutions sufficient. The final reality of an institution lies in its meaning for the members of the society in which it exists, and its final evaluation must be based on its capacity to fulfil the changing needs of individuals. This concept is essential to an understanding of the colonists' dissatisfaction with the effort of the Niger project administration to reproduce artificially a static model of their traditional social structure. This can also be seen in their reaction to a changed supernatural order; an analysis which failed to descend beneath the level of form would miss the significant fact that their psychological response to religion and the basic premises of their theology have remained unaffected by an "Islamization" which amounts to little more than adopting certain new propitiatory usages.

Apparently not understanding the interrelationship of cultural institutions and the sanctions which give them meaning, the administration of the Niger Irrigation Project sought to modify the Mossi organization of economic activity without referring to the traditional values to which it is vitally related. Seeming to regard the indigenous culture as little more than a compendium of savage rites upon which superior European usages need only be imposed in order to prevail, such an approach reveals a failure to comprehend both the complexity and the tenacity of the Mossi cultural heritage.

249 rainy season ends, the tobacco has already grown tall. In the month of December, one begins to gather the leaves, taking first the lowest ones which are the first to ripen. One keeps plucking up the stem and gathering leaves until the end /485/ of January. Then the tobacco stems are cut down to get the seeds.

276 In order to make tobacco, the leaves are left to dry in the sun, and then, when they are dry, the men crush them in small mortars. They add a little water, stir, and make tobacco balls, or rather small elongated loaves worth one sou apiece. These loaves are entrusted to the women to be sold at market.

249 The Mossi also grow indigo (gara in Mossi, as in Bambara). During the rainy season, indigo is sown in separate plots. First the grass is removed, and then the ground is struck here and there with the koutiaga. Then indigo seeds are broadcast, and the soil is moved with the ouaka to cover the seeds so that the birds will not eat them. At the end of a fortnight, the indigo begins to shoot. The weeds are removed by hand. The leaves may be gathered forty days later. They are gathered by hand and given to the women, who press them into flat loaves.

248 As for hemp (berenga in Mossi, pepan in Nounouma, kánzé in Kassouna, dafou in Mandé), it is sown among the maize that surrounds the soukala as soon as the latter has put forth shoots. The barenga has a long stalk similar to maize and hard to distinguish from the latter, but while maize is harvested in August, berenga stalks are left standing until October or November.

262 Its leaves are used for sauces.

241 Hemp closes our list of food crops and other crops in Mossi territory. Let us close with a few words on agricultural tools.

The basic tool of cultivation, here as in all other parts of West Africa, is the daba. The Mossi have two kinds:

1. The ouaka, a kind of daba with a broad, thin blade. It is used to turn up the soil.

/486/ 2. The koutiaga, koutiara or koutiaba. This is a kind of small hoe which is used to make holes when sowing grain or seeds.

The Mossi also have the following accessory tools:

1. The laré. This is an axe used to cut stumps when a plot is cleared.

●241 2. The sououga, a knife used to cut down the heads of millet.

3. The gouégo, a curved knife, a kind of scythe which is used to cut straw, for example when preparing thatch for hut roofs.

To summarize, cultivation is the most important pursuit among the Mossi. It insures the subsistence of this population which is [161] relatively dense, since there are 25 inhabitants per square kilometer, a very high figure unusual for West Africa. The species of cultivated plants are as numerous as anywhere else, and the agricultural tools tend to be superior. In spite of all this, the Mossi are not very good cultivators, and in this respect I believe that they must be placed beneath the Bobo, Gourounsi, Habé, Bambara, etc. One senses that the Mossi descend at least in part from people who were once familiar with easier and more fruitful ways of procuring food (such as war and attendant loot) or, to put it another way, one senses the meeting of two groups, one of which was truly adept at cultivation while the other was less so. Thus, although the Mossi are cultivators first and foremost and actually subsist on cultivation, the latter is not as basic to them as it is to the Bobo, the Gourounsi, etc. They do practice cultivation, this is even by far their chief subsistence activity, and yet one cannot say that they are, in all respects, good cultivators.

231 Are they at least noteworthy stockbreeders?

To this we may give forthwith a negative answer. The Mossi are very mediocre, not to say worthless breeders. This is not to mean, incidentally, that there is no cattle in Mossi territory. There [563] is a great deal, on the contrary, and this stems from the presence of the Foulbé, who are cattle herders, as much as from the presence of the Yarsé, who /487/ have always owned considerable quantities of cattle, and from the density of the Mossi population. The Mossi themselves, nevertheless, own little cattle. To be more exact, they have a low per capita average of cattle.

We might list over-all or partial figures, but those most recently 231 compiled are vitiated by the fact that Mossi territory lost part of 563 its cattle in recent years due to repeated famines around 1906-1908 and to an overly rigorous tax system that went into effect a little later. We shall, therefore, merely validate our statement that the

323 wide, 2 meters in diameter, and open at the top), then some straw on which the pots are laid, and then more straw and firewood. They set this afire and keep it burning for twelve hours.

In order to polish their pots, the women take the bark of the [314] nobora or n'kouna. They soak it in huge canari for a whole day. The water acquires a reddish hue. The fired and cooled pots are immersed in these canari for a while, and then allowed to dry in the open air. When this is over, the pots may be taken to market and sold.

The blacksmiths' wives make their pottery during the dry season. During the winter season, they work in their husbands' fields.

326 During the winter season, Mossi blacksmiths work both at cultivation and at their trade, but mostly at cultivation. During the dry season, on the other hand, they work only at the blacksmith's trade.

As far as cultivation is concerned, they mostly grow small millet, followed by large white millet and large red millet, maize, peanuts, underground peas, sesame, and beans. They cultivate cotton and tobacco, but no indigo. Their wives sow gombo, etc.

326 /516/ They own livestock which their children herd. As a 231 rule, they have a little more livestock than other Mossi, except for goats and donkeys. This, incidentally, should not surprise us, for the Negro blacksmiths of West Africa often display an ability for stockbreeding and especially for horse trading. Among the Mossi, however, this is not very pronounced.

326 The blacksmiths neither hunt nor fish, but they do engage in gathering activities like other Mossi. They exercise no industries other than those of iron and pottery. They do not work copper, silver, or gold. They do not work as weavers, either. They entrust their wives with the task of gathering and spinning whatever cotton they grow, and then they hand it over to the weavers.

326 They do undertake a little trading, slightly more in fact than 438 the average Mossi. When a blacksmith has smelted a large quantity of iron, he sometimes purchases some livestock, leads it to Ouanké, buys kola nuts which he takes to Saraféré, and brings back salt from that locality. This is not done very frequently, however.

325 4. The iron rasp or sodara.
306 5. The sharpening tool or karé.
413 6. The iron wedge to cut copper (kétouga).
7. Shears to cut copper (mankasaga).
8. A few very primitive goatskin bellows.

306 As an example of a jeweler, may I present Sulémani Déréma, an inhabitant of Ouagadougou. He lives with his older brother, who is the head of the soukala and who has a wife and child. Sulémani himself has two wives and two children. A younger brother lives with them with his wife and child. Finally, there are other brothers in the soukala but they are not married (let us note in passing that this soukala is exceptional, for the general rule among the /518/ Mossi is for every household to live separately; here, although they still live together, every household works separately).

[592]

Sulémani Déréma buys his copper at market, or else he works the copper furnished by his customers to order. He makes bracelets, rings, copper stirrups, etc.

306 He also works in the fields during the winter season, and like
241 the other households in the soukala, he does this on his own. Sulémani has two fields in the bush, one of small millet and another of large white millet, and in addition he grows maize around the soukala on the stretch of ground allotted him by the head of the soukala.

He owns neither large nor small livestock, not even chickens, He neither hunts nor fishes.

His jeweler's trade nets him more than his fields.

324 The blacksmith and niaka are representatives of metalworking.
316 Let us now proceed to stonework.

The makers of crushing stones are called nanlora in Mossi, from nan, "crushing stone" and lora, "to shatter."

Our quarrymen look in the bush for large stone slabs resting on the ground, and whenever possible raised in some manner above it. They draw lines on these large flat stones with karité and soumbara, the size of the crushing stones they wish to extract, and then they gather wood under the slab and set it afire. They allow the fire

285 294 435 2. Similar but smaller hats, worth from 1,000 to 1,500 cowries.

/529/ 3. Round straw hats with wide brims, mentioned above. These are worth 1,700 cowries.

285 All the leather parts on those hats are added by the shoemaker.

294 241 We have already mentioned that our hat makers are not exclusively manufacturers, that they also till the soil. It must be added that the latter activity nets them more than their trade. The man I mentioned cultivates a field of small millet and one of large red millet in the bush. He also grows maize, peanuts, and underground peas around his soukala. He owns neither large nor small livestock, but only chickens.

285 294 592 In his soukala he has two wives, four children, two married brothers who have one wife apiece but no children, and two unmarried brothers, as well as a father. They all make hats.

He lives at Saponé, where there are many hat manufacturers.

282 294 [564] After straw work, let us mention leatherwork.

Mossi shoemakers do not form a caste. Anyone who wants to may marry among them, and anyone who wishes to do so may exercise their trade.

[592] As an example, here is Kinoga Kologo, a Mossi, and the head of a soukala. He lives with two wives, two children, and an unmarried brother. His soukala consists of three huts.

His tools are as follows:

282 294 413 1. The pongo, a kind of broad little knife with a flaring blade hafted to a very short handle. It is used to cut hide.

2. The gansiouba, a wooden krife used to scrape and rub hides, clean them and smooth them.

3. The désara, a small tool with a wooden handle and a curved iron stem. It is used red hot to trace designs on hides.

4. The pime, a small awl used to sew hides.

5. The large tirisiga. This is an iron seal used to imprint hides with small circles.

6. The small tirisiga. This is a smaller seal, /530/ an iron rod whose tip makes a very tiny seal.

282 294 435 As among nearly all Blacks, the Mossi shoemaker is his own tanner. He buys sheepskins and goatskins at market (small ones

282 294 435 and needles are made by blacksmiths. A strike-a-light steel is worth 200 cowries.

5. They make sheaths for knives and swords. Knife sheaths are worth 200 cowries, sword sheaths 3,000.

6. Bridles and saddles. Saddles are worth 3,000 cowries, bridles 5,000.

Shoemakers also work with deerskin and leopardskin. They adorn Mossi truncheons or clubs with leopardskin. They also adorn spears with it. The leopardskin is provided by the customer. The shoemaker does not purchase it directly.

Leopardskin is sold at market in small pieces worth 100 cowries. A large leopardskin is worth 10 francs, a small one 7 francs.

Crocodile skin is also used by shoemakers. People who have killed a crocodile go and sell its skin at market, or else someone purchases the skin from the hunter and retails it at market. The skin of a small crocodile (hardly any but these are to be found in Mossi territory, owing to the scarcity of water) is worth 1,000 cowries. People who wish the shoemaker to work one of these skins purchase it at market and take it to him.

282 294 There are no hippopotamus skins in Mossi territory, because water is scarce and watercourses are small. As for elephant skin, it is too tough to be worked and remains unused.

282 294 241 The shoemaker I am describing exercises his trade only during the dry season. During the rainy season he tills the soil, and this nets him more than his trade. /532/ The same thing applies, incidentally, to all Mossi shoemakers. During the winter season, our man cultivates a field of small millet and one of large red millet, a small rice field, and a little maize around his soukala. He plants beans in his two millet fields. He owns neither large nor small livestock, not even a chicken or a dog.

There are no makers of headcrests among the Mossi, and the Boussouma chief I questioned about it told me there never were any.

286 Let us now proceed to the cotton industry, and study in turn the weaver's, tailor's and dyer's trades.

The Mossi weaver (soulouga) is a weaver-cultivator. He tills the soil during the rainy season and exercises his trade during the dry season. In fact he is primarily a cultivator, for cultivation rather than weaving comes first and foremost to him.

592 1. Husband.
2. Wife or wives.
3. Unmarried children, sons or daughters.
4. Slaves.

Sometimes, it also includes young unmarried brothers (see above).

592 As a rule, every soukala-household has only one large bush
241 field in addition to the garden plot surrounding the soukala (where
461 maize and large red millet are grown during the rainy season, tobacco and cotton during the dry season).

The head of the household, his unmarried sons and unmarried brothers, work on those fields during the rainy season from six in the morning to three in the afternoon, with a long rest period around noon. The women work there also, but their hours are different owing to their household tasks.

The unmarried sons and brothers also have small individual plots of cotton and large red millet. They work them in the afternoon after three o'clock. During the rainy season, as a rule, there are no rest days. A few Mossi, however, have adopted the customs [527] of their Yarsé neighbors and rest on Friday. Others, who are Moslemized, and incidentally very few, rest both on Friday and on Monday.

During the dry season the members of the household repair hut roofs, go hunting, or else participate in the clearing of family fields, etc. In addition to this they work for themselves, as weavers for example. The money earned in this fashion goes to them and not to the soukala head.

592 /556/ It is the head of the soukala-household, the husband and father, who provides all occupants of the soukala with food throughout the year, morning and evening. He also provides clothing for those who cannot provide their own, but those who can do so procure it themselves.

592 We know that it is sometimes the head of the family and some-
584 times the head of the household who gives the children of the house-
464 hold in marriage. It sometimes happens, however, that a son
565 leaves the soukala without his father's permission. He usually does this in order to win a wife, when the head of the family or the

769 along with millet flour mixed in water. A few chickens are also killed. No one works on that day, but people eat, drink, and rest. There is no drumming or dancing, however.

Other Mossi (at Yakki, for example) make offerings to the ancestors in the hut of their first wife rather than on the graves.

Another feast comes at sowing time and is called Tengana. Certain leaves are sought in the bush, cooked with beans and underground peas, and eaten. Much dolo is also preapred.

● 241 On the first day of sowing, one goes to the fields and offers a 776 chicken, millet flour, and dolo to the field stones (tenkougouri) and to the earth (tenga or tempeloun), so the sowing will go well, so there will be a good harvest, and so everyone will be in good health.

There is also an earth feast or Tensé (plural of tenga), which is celebrated once a year during the rainy season. It is the Moro Naba who sets the exact date of the Tensé. Every soukala head [782] kills a beef, a sheep, or a chicken. The young men collect the blood of the sacrificed animals in gourds and pour some upon the ground (to the Earth) in order to secure a good crop. The remainder is mixed with the flour of large white millet and eaten. Much dolo is consumed. The earth feast is the special festivity of those people who are called Tenga (earth), Tembila, Tenfisi, etc., and of those who were born on the day of the Tensé.

On that day sacrifices are also offered to Naba Ouondé (the Chief God).

/588/ On years when the previous millet harvest was bad, the Tensé is not celebrated.

The Mossi have no special harvesting feast. Actually, it is the Tiougou or Bassara (celebrated when the millet has been harvested) that is the harvesting feast as well as the feast of the ancestors.

782 The Mossi do not offer sacrifices to isolated trees, but they do 778 to sacred groves or woods.

At Ouagadougou, at the spot where the White Fathers now live, there once stood a small sacred wood made up of large trees and thorny bushes, where sacrifices were offered before the French tore it down.

Every year the Moro Naba offered a sheep and a chicken to this sacred grove through the head of the Sékou quarter. He also offered

592 The compound, from an intellectual point of view, is a kind of subfamily. It is not the whole family; it is not the equivalent of the total family. It is, however, quite superior to the single household.

592 If the Mossi family of Yatenga were completely communal and
182 perfectly integrated, the 100 or 125 persons or so who make up a
571 Mossi family would live and work together. A less marked but still quite appreciable degree of community would exist if the compound were a tight economic unit (this does occur among many blacks of the /French/ Sudan, especially among the Bobo /230/ of the Residency of Léo, the Menkiéra, the Nounouma /Nunuma/, the Kassonfra /Awuna/, etc., and also among the Samo of Yatenga as we shall see later), with all the people who live in it working and consuming together under the authority and guidance of the head of the home. Actually, there is even more disintegration of the family among our Mossi of Yatenga. In each home there are work groups which vary in number according to the importance of the compound and the number of its occupants.

592 Work groups. —We must proceed to the work group, then, in order
571 to deal with the actual economic unit. This group has the communal
●241 fields which are not, therefore, properly speaking, familial fields or even subfamilial fields. They belong to a subordinate unit. It is the head of the work group who supplies food for all the people in his group during the greater part of the year (seven months out of twelve). In return, they owe him the larger part of their time during the rainy season (two days out of three) but little work during the dry season. Each member of the group also has his own little field which he cultivates on the third day, as we shall see later on.

592 Consumption. Meals. —People do not assemble for meals in the
264 same fashion during the rainy season as during the dry season.

During the rainy season the members of each work group eat together at noon in the fields, but men and women are always apart. The boys eat with the men, the girls and small children with the women. In the evening they gather for meals in the same manner as during the dry season.

During the dry season the members of each compound, the whole zaka, eat together, but they are divided into several groups. First, there is the basic division between men and women. Then, if the compound is a large one, there are on the male side the groupings of old men, married men, and young unmarried men. There are also three groups on the female side: old women, married women,

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

all year round. The Red and White Voltas are important only as drainage systems during the short rainy period, for they dwindle to a string of small stagnant pools in the dry season. In some low-lying areas near the main watercourses, trapped waters provide the moisture for dank riverine vegetation.

The soils of Mossi country, which are typical of the Sudanic and Sahel areas, were formed chiefly by the weathering of Pre-Cambrian rocks. Ferruginous soils of varying depths, red argils, and pure silicates of aluminum predominate in the northern regions. In the south are found thin, sandy soils formed by the decomposition of crystalline rocks and sandstones. Most of these soils are eroded by torrential rains, the scouring action of the harmattan, and the incendiary action of man and nature. Even where the soils are reasonably fertile, the nature of the underlying rocks precludes important deposits of ground water. In the western sandstone region, rain filters down with such rapidity that water can be obtained only from deep wells. In the remainder of the territory, the presence of Pre-Cambrian rocks induces a rapid runoff, with the result that wells yield very little water at any depth. Rainfall collects only in river-bed pools or along dams constructed for that purpose in hollow places. The building of dams was relatively unknown in aboriginal times, and the Mossi did not practice irrigation farming.

During the dry season, Mossi country presents a picture of such utter aridity that one wonders whether it is possible for such parched red soils to produce plant life. After the first drops of rain, however, the entire plain quickly becomes covered with grasses that sometimes reach heights of five or six feet. The most characteristic and valuable trees in the region are the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), the locust-bean (*Parkia biglobosa*), the shea butter (*Butyrospermum parkii*), the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), and the kapok (*Bombax costatum*). The sole and unimportant representative of the palm family is the *Borassus aethiopium*. There are several kinds of acacias, including the *Kenyaya senegalensis*, and a wide variety of silk-cotton trees, the most important of which is *Eryodendron anfractuosum*.

The cultivated plants of the region include numerous varieties of cereals, roots, and legumes. Several varieties of sorghum (*Sorghum vulgare*) and millet (*Pennisetum typhoides*) constitute the staple crops of the Mossi, but maize (*Zea mays*) is extremely important because it is one of the first crops to be harvested after the difficult hungry period. Peanuts, onions, rice, beans, okra, fonio, and sweet potatoes form the bulk of the other cultivated crops. Manioc is grown only in small quantities because it requires moist soil for optimum development. The Mossi grow tobacco in fields around their

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

become overgrown with grass and weeds during the rainy season. This clearing was done to within a few yards of the palace, but was not completed. Early in the morning of the day chosen for the actual rendering of the agricultural tribute, the retainers placed baskets of produce along these paths. During the morning ceremony, the Ouidi Naba presented a basket of millet to the Mogho Naba. Then the Bendere Naba, acting as Sore Naba ("chief of the road"), signaled on his drum, and the men with baskets who were waiting on the uncleared portion of the paths, preceded by drummers and men with hoes, axes, and other tools, began to move forward. The men in the processions raised a din, shouting, singing, drumming, and pretending that the task of clearing was very difficult. From time to time, the more energetic among those who were not carrying bundles ran ahead of the others, turned somersaults, and then, going through the motions of warriors in battle, pranced back into the procession. All the processions came to the shed occupied by the royal drummers and deposited their burdens. These were later retrieved by the palace staff and stored for use in the royal household.

The royal household was also supplied with produce grown by the royal wives. Foodstuffs for guests and fodder for the ruler's horses were provided by the people of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, which were under the general supervision of the Kam Naba. Two or three times during the agricultural season, this official recruited extra help from these wards to help cultivate the fields. In recompense for this *sosogha* (work bee), the laborers were given food, drink, and kola nuts from the royal household. At the end of the year, the harvesting and threshing of the grain from the Mogho Naba's fields was the occasion for an elaborate ceremony, "Mogh Nab' kawinre" ("threshing the ruler's grain").[3]

To begin this ceremony, the Mogho Naba summoned a local earth-priest, the Manougoudougou Tengsoba, to the court. This man, a descendant of the Ninisi, had to perform the propitiatory sacrifices to the earth deity who was symbolized by the threshing floor. After the sacrifices were completed, the Kam Naba went to the threshing floor with the young men of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, who threshed the millet gathered there. The next morning they all returned to the threshing floor with the Bendere Naba and his minstrels, who recited the Mogho Naba's genealogy and sang praises to his ancestors. The drummers then beat out work rhythms and traditional drum patterns to which the workers danced while scattering the millet far and wide. Finally, the dancing stopped, and the Kam Naba drew a line on the threshing floor, dividing the pile of millet in two; the Bilbalgo people gathered one half, the Dapoya people the other. Regard-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

ably been younger sons sent to rule in conquered territories claimed that their ancestors were direct descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. Thus, to the Mossi, the power to rule was intimately linked to closeness of descent from the royal ancestors. The supernatural power of these ancestors, and the vigilance they were believed to maintain over the affairs of their descendants, were regarded as important factors in Mossi government.

From the moment when the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or any other Mossi ruler "drank the namtibo" and thereby received the nam of his ancestors, he had the right—indeed, the duty—to offer sacrifices to these ancestors in the name of his subjects. Every night, throughout Mossi country, the Baloum Naba of every ruler performed an act of supplication (Kwaga Basgha) to the ancestors. He beseeched them to protect the subjects of their descendants through the night, to maintain peace in Mossi country, and to grant health, children, and prosperity to all Mossi. This nightly ceremony was climaxed yearly by an elaborate ritual in honor of the ancestors (called the Basgha in some areas, and the Pelegha, Filigha, or Kinkiriga in others) that began at the highest levels of the government and ultimately linked every Mossi chief and lineage head.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the other Mogho Nanamse and Dimdamba, initiated this ceremony in his own kingdom. His celebration, called "M'barengma," was held at the end of the Mossi agricultural year and after the Soretasgho. Thus, the M'barengma was a New Year's festival in thanksgiving for good crops, as well as the annual Feast of the Dead. A few weeks before the first moon of the new year (the *ki-basgha* or *ki-pelegha*), the Mogho Naba ordered his soghondamba and samande-kamba to clean up the palace buildings and courtyards—an activity intended to notify the ever-vigilant ancestors that preparations were being made to offer sacrifices in their honor. A short time later, the Mogho Naba gave grain from his fields to the Pughtiema so she could prepare millet water for the sacrifices. Present-day Mossi insist that part of the grain came from the first ears harvested that year and part from those of the previous year. This was supposed to symbolize the continuity between crops, mirroring the continuity between the ruler and his ancestors. A few days before the principal ceremony, the Mogho Naba ordered the Larhalle Naba to pour millet water and sacrifice chickens on the graves of former Mogho Nanamse.

Shortly before the ki-basgha moon appeared, the ruler had to leave his palace at night to elude the ancestors, who had been attracted by the preparations and who were expected to be angry when they discovered that the sacrifices were not yet ready. The unjust ruler feared ancestral sanctions; the just ruler that his ancestors might want him to join them. One night he

went to the home of his Samande Naba, the next to the Gounghin ward, then to Baghin, and subsequently to the homes of other officials. He could not remain long at one place for fear that the ancestors might find him. Every morning, however, when the cock's crow heralded the ancestors' departure, he returned to his palace.

The principal part of the Basgha ceremony was performed on the night when the crescent moon appeared. On that night more than any other, the ruler had to seek refuge elsewhere, because the ancestors visited the palace to accept the sacrifices offered to them by the Pughtiema with the help of the Baloum Naba and the chief eunuch of the harem. The exact nature of this ceremony is unknown, but it is known that the Baloum Naba used the sacred namtibo along with animals and millet-flour water provided by the Pughtiema and the chief eunuch for propitiatory sacrifices to the ancestors. The aim of these sacrifices was to induce the ancestors to grant good crops, health, happiness, and children to their descendants, and to "increase the force of the namtibo."[1] At cock's crow the Bendere Naba sprinkled a flour infusion called *gningmassem* ("water of health") on the palace courtyard so that the ruler might walk upon it when he returned. The Mogho Naba was greeted with drumbeats and escorted to the palace gate. His entry into the antechamber marked the close of this ceremony, and the people retired until later in the day.

The elaborate public ceremony of the Basgha took place in mid-morning. The ministers and important officials, clad in ceremonial garb, arrived at the palace quite early. When the Mogho Naba appeared, the Bendere Naba recited the official genealogy, starting with Ouedraogo and Oubri and ending with elaborate praises of the current ruler. The ministers and their entourage then saluted the Mogho Naba and wished him *Ne tarbo*, which means a happy and prosperous new year for himself and the country. He, in turn, took advantage of this occasion to give many presents to his retinue, and his wives distributed huge amounts of food and drink to the assembly until everyone was satiated. Then all the officials except the Bendere Naba and his group paid homage to the Mogho Naba and departed. The musicians remained at court most of the day, beating their drums and singing praises to their sovereign and his illustrious ancestors. The royal pages kept them well supplied with food and beer, and now and again during the day the ruler sent them gifts among which robes were often included. Whenever the drummers received a gift, they slipped into a rhythmic pattern that signified: *Tompaongo, Wend'kaouss' Naba niore, Wenne wilig yinre*, or, "We bow in thanksgiving for your gift. May God give the ruler long life. May God grant us to be alive next year so that we may do this again." The

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

climax of this gift-giving came when the ruler sent the Bendere Naba about 19,000 cowries and a slave.[8] This ceremony terminated at nightfall.

The close of the Mogho Naba's Basgha heralded the start of similar ceremonies throughout his kingdom. The heads of the other Mossi kingdoms and the Dimdamba were free to hold their own Basgha when they wished; but the Ouagadougou ruler's own subjects, including the provincial ministers, district chiefs, village chiefs, and lineage heads, apparently were not. One reason for this, aside from respect for the ruler, was that the important officials' head wives had to wait for the yeast (*dabili*) from the Mogho Naba's beer before they could prepare the sacrificial offerings for their husbands' ancestors. This dabili went from district to district or to several districts at once, depending on whether the chiefs celebrated Basgha at the same time or successively. Thus, the dabili from the capital united all the wives of the royal clan, and made for both a ritual continuity in the veneration of all ancestors and a strengthening of religious and political bonds.

The Basgha ceremonies on the district level were much less elaborate than those held at Ouagadougou, but just as important. The district chief, too, had his buildings repaired and his grain distributed for sacrifices for the ancestors. A few days before the actual ceremony, he ordered the Gande Naba to pour millet water on the graves of recently deceased chiefs and to sacrifice chickens there. As in Ouagadougou, these sacrifices were offered to induce the chiefly ancestors to grant the villagers health, food, and children. Unlike the Mogho Naba, most district chiefs did not ritually hide from their ancestors for several nights prior to the ceremony. Some of them did change their sleeping place within the compound every night, and the court people always slept indoors during this period. On the night of the Basgha itself, however, the district chiefs did not sleep in their compounds.

As in Ouagadougou, the Pughtiema performed the main ceremony by pouring millet water as a libation to the ancestors who visited her hut. She was assisted by the Baloum Naba, who had possession of the namtibo. Apparently, the district chief remained in hiding and took no part in the ceremony. But he was the main figure in the morning ceremony, which differed little from that of Ouagadougou. In some districts the Tengsoba performed a public sacrifice to the ancestors. He was given the namtibo—sacred objects that had belonged to former district chiefs—and poured libations and sacrificed chickens to all of the chief's ancestors. He also prayed both to these ancestors and to his own on the chief's behalf, and beseeched them to grant long life and happiness to the district population. He also declared that the sacred objects would seek out and kill any enemies of the local ruler, wherever they might be. Once this ritual had been com-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28
[Pre-World War II Period]

economic development should take precedence over everything else in the colonies. The Mossi were to be directly affected by the policies of both Van Vollenhoven and Sarraut. The colony of Haut-Sénégal et Niger was suppressed in March 1919, and replaced by the new colony of Upper Volta, in which the Mossi were the chief ethnic group. Moreover, Ouagadougou was chosen as the administrative center of this new colony.[19]

The new Governor of the Upper Volta, Edouard Hesling, who arrived in Ouagadougou in November 1919, sympathized with Van Vollenhoven's views, but was even more interested in economic development. He was determined to transform Ouagadougou from a small town with an indigenous population of about 8,000 and some 76 European soldiers, merchants, and missionaries, into a capital worthy of a colony. Shortly after he arrived, he summoned the Mogho Naba and the traditional ministers and had them recruit some 2,000 salaried and unsalaried men to provide enough mud bricks and wooden beams to complete the construction of eleven administrative buildings before the rainy season began the following May.

Hesling and his administrators believed that the Upper Volta, a country "with such diverse products and such a dense population, could attain an exceptional level of development by acquiring those economic elements which ensure prosperity."[20] Cotton was one of those elements. They believed that the Upper Volta "can and should export thousands of tons as soon as an easy and economical way of shipping is established."[21] By 1925, Hesling had constructed 6,000 kilometers of roads in the Upper Volta, about one-eighth the entire road network of French West Africa. Travelers in the Upper Volta at this time wrote of "the enforced enthusiasm with which the natives, under M. E. Hesling, have thrown themselves into agricultural labor and in particular into the planting of cotton."[22]

The administration of the Upper Volta continued to furnish Mossi manpower for the development of the other colonies as well as for the colonial army. In 1922, it was asked to furnish "6,000 workers for the Thies-Kayes railway, renewable every six months; and under the same conditions to furnish 2,000 laborers to build the railways in the Ivory Coast. Similarly, with the consent of the chief administrator of the colony, it was possible to recruit a thousand workers in the regions of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso for private business in the Ivory Coast."[23] Londres, who visited the Upper Volta in the late 1920's, reports that Mossi country was known as "a 'reservoir' of manpower."[24] Burthe d'Annelet reports that during this same period, "The Minister of War [took] 45,000 men each year to compensate for the weakness of our metropolitan recruitment, and

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

CHAPTER 9

Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

BY ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

The Mossi represent the dominant population of the Voltaic Republic, numbering about 1,600,000 out of some 3,200,000 inhabitants. They represent the unique example of a group which has preserved its ethnic identity and political autonomy through all the vicissitudes of Sudanic history until it was conquered by the French in 1896. Tradition records that the people who became the Mossi left the Dagomba region in present-day Ghana during the eleventh century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers *(Moro Nabas)* who formerly held feudal-like control over the provinces, districts and villages which comprise their domains. The villages, with their patri-local, polygynous, extended family households, formed the basic Mossi settlement pattern. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus carried the power of the Mossi rulers into the smallest villages, and funneled taxes and tribute back to them. This structure still exists, but of course it has been modified by the French.

The Mossi were and are still divided into stratified royal, noble and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sub-lineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there once were large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossicized.

The topography of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic grasslands. It is an immense plain, some 1,500 feet above sea level and broken only by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The annual total rainfall is between 30 and 40 inches, and falls almost entirely as heavy showers or thundershowers during the period from June to September. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for successful crop cultivation that any variation in the cycle results in low crop yields and a difficult "hungry period" the following year before the new crops are harvested. The Mossi do not practice irrigation, and would have trouble doing so because the three Volta Rivers which drain their territory serve as drainage chiefly during the rainy season. Only the Black Volta has water all year round; the

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

133 Red and White Voltas are merely a series of small stagnant pools during the dry season. In some low-lying areas around the main water courses, trapped water provides the moisture for dank riverine vegetation.

134 The soils of Mossi country are mainly ferruginous with red argils and pure silicates of aluminum predominating in the northern region. The soils in the south are thin, sandy, and formed from the decom-
137 position of crystalline rocks and sandstones. During the dry season the Mossi landscape appears too sterile to produce plant life, but with the first drops of rain the entire country soon becomes covered with the grasses and shrubs which are characteristic of this Sudanese region. The uncultivated but valuable trees of this area include the Baobab *(Adansonia digitata)*, the locust bean *(Parkia biglobosa)*, the shea-butter *(Butyrospermum parkii)*, the tamarind *(Tamarindus*
● 241 *indica)* and the kapok *(Bombax costatum)*. The plants which the Mossi cultivate include varieties of cereals, roots and legumes. Sorghums *(Sorghum vulgare)* and millets *(Pennisetum typhoides)* are their staples, with maize *(Zea mays)* filling the role of a secondary but rather useful crop because its growing cycle is shorter than that of other important crops and it breaks the "hungry period." Maize would be a more important crop to the Mossi if it could grow on soil less fertile than what is normally available around the Mossi compound—the area where it brings the greatest yield. Peanuts, onions,
240 rice, beans, okra, peas and sweet potatoes are other food crops. To-
248 bacco is grown for local consumption, but the crops which have the greatest export value are cotton and indigo, used for making cloth and dyeing it.

224 The wild fauna of the country does not provide a major part of the
262 food needs of the Mossi people. The several species of deer and antelope, monkeys, rabbits and wild pig are hunted and used for food.
136 But the elephants and lions which are also found in the country are sources of great distress to the people because the former decimate the growing crops and the latter attack and kill the grazing animals.

231 The Mossi rear two main types of cattle: a zebu-like one in the north-
[234] ern regions and a small dwarf variety in the south. These animals are kept primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed
231 for meat until they are very old. The animals which provide the
262 Mossi with meat are goats, sheep, chickens and guinea fowls. Pig-
[177] raising is not widespread and seems to be declining in importance with the increasing observance of Islamic food taboos, even among
262 people who are still pagan. Fish forms only a minor part of the Mossi
487 diet and is obtained mainly from traders rather than from local activ-
231 ities. The Mossi also rear donkeys and horses for which they have